

# A Remembrance of the Good Doctor Lloyd Noland, and TCI “Welfare Capitalism” of Another Age.

By Bill Kitchens



An oldfashionedhistory™

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I never knew Dr. Lloyd Noland; I was still on all fours when he died in 1949. I'm not sure how well we would have gotten along anyway. Still, I hate to see him lose his place in history, along with the curious phenomenon we label 'welfare capitalism' that helped establish his place in history. Birmingham, especially the western section, owes much more to Dr. Noland than to the flamboyant land speculators, coal and iron barons, and golden hearted madams who populate our folk history and our place names. Yet memory of Noland's legacy is fast being erased.

After generations, Lloyd Noland Hospital no longer sits atop "Hospital Hill" in Fairfield. Lloyd Noland Parkway was renamed Richard Scrushy Parkway for a while, until the high flying HealthSouth hospital entrepreneur crashed and burned, and the parkway eventually reverted to its old name. But that last vestige of honor in Fairfield, the one time "model industrial city" nestled into the side of Birmingham, is likely to be transient.

Not to short the importance of the hospital he built, the patients he served, and the doctors he trained, they were certainly important, but Noland's legacy extends far beyond them. We will read a bit of that history, aided by some historic photographs that give us a better feel for the life and times than can words alone. Beyond that, we will examine some lasting issues that arise from this story, issues that still burn today.

Birmingham, which is indirectly part of our story, was a late Nineteenth Century mining boom town, not of gold or silver, but of coal and iron ore. Located in something of a geologic anomaly, all the major constituents for iron making: coal, iron ore, and limestone are all found there in close proximity. Added to the mineral endowment was another indispensable factor – good rail connections.

Birmingham's dramatic rise led promoters to describe it as the "Magic City". When Dr. Noland came to Birmingham in 1913, though, the acrid cloud rising from the Magic City's main industry was in danger of blowing away like the smoke from a magician's flash powder.

Birmingham had been making iron for some years, and it had its Iron Man, Vulcan, to prove it. But the Iron Age had ended with the Nineteenth Century. The prospect for success in the Twentieth lay with steel, a sort of super alloy of iron, and steel making required breaking into a much tougher league.

Undaunted however, many of Birmingham's storied early industrialists put their past competitive spats aside and hammered together the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company (known familiarly to us older folks as TCI) as Birmingham's entry into the steel business. But this conglomerate of sixteen coal and iron interests was a money pit. Oh, it had prospects to be sure – huge land holdings of iron ore, limestone and coal reserves – some 428,648 acres as of 1900. Huge capital outlays on plant and equipment, mostly financed with debt, had created the beginnings of a modern, vertically integrated steel manufacturer, the first in the south. In the second part of this piece, we will look at some historic photos of TCI's impressive facilities.

For all their effort though, TCI could not compete in steel making with the big guys up north. That salient fact was obscured for some time by TCI's huge stock bubble, held up more by hot air from Wall Street speculators than from its furnaces.

Ironically, Birmingham's "Iron Man" played its part in the steel bubble. Some Magic City promoters further threw fiscal caution to the wind to create a bit of shock and awe for their city – and its stock companies. They hired noted Italian sculptor Giuseppe Moretti to create the world's largest cast iron sculpture – made entirely from Birmingham iron of course. The fifty six foot hollow statue of the Roman demigod Vulcan, made of self supporting cast iron plates bolted together, was the sensation of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, also known as the St. Louis World's Fair of 1904 (Vulcan at the Fair, above).



All the folks singing “*Meet me in St. Louis, Louie, Meet me at the Fair*” went home associating the iron making industry with Birmingham. In the 1907 “Panic” though, debts were coming due and TCI was broke. But for one fortunate happenstance, the bubble might have burst, along with Birmingham’s dream of becoming the steel capital of the south. A leading New York brokerage firm had become the majority stockholder of TCI; but it, too, was shaky and might not survive TCI’s collapse.

Now it happened that some heavy hitters of the steel industry including J. P. Morgan, Henry Clay Frick, and Judge Elbert Gary, who collectively cared not a heap of slag about TCI or Birmingham, stood to lose a bundle if the brokerage firm failed. They decided that United States Steel had to buy this upstart steel maker to save them all. Perhaps “too big to fail” started right there. Judge Gary personally appealed to “Trust Busting” President Theodore Roosevelt for relief from anti-trust action in this case, and it was promptly granted.

That was a momentous event for Birmingham, met with relief and joy from those who understood both TCI’s, and the city’s peril. US Steel sent a first rate manager, George Gordon Crawford, to whip TCI into shape. Only a few weeks after the purchase in 1907, Crawford was developing new mines, building mills and railroads; and to meet their projected huge industrial water demand, a major dam on Village Creek with a 1.5 mile intake tunnel. The list of things to be done was almost endless – as was the manpower needed. But the speculators and struggling industrialists who built TCI had neglected the unglamorous human infrastructure needed to support such a vast and complex industrial enterprise.

Before our day of relatively affluent, mobile work forces, camps for workers and their families had to be built at the job sites, with the company providing homes, stores, churches, schools, and dispensaries (small combination clinics and pharmacies) all in easy walking distance, or along company rail lines, of the iron and coal mines, mills, blast furnaces, coke ovens, machine shops, limestone quarries, rail yards, industrial water supplies, etc. etc., required to make steel, and to get it shipped out to the waiting world.



There were TCI villages at Ensley, Fairfield, Bessemer, Edgewater, Blue Creek, Pratt City, Blockton, Bayview, Wenonah, Ishcooda, Docena, ...eventually there would be twenty two villages (forty four you might say, as they were segregated) housing around forty thousand people when Noland came, and growing close to a hundred thousand people. It could be said that the western section of Jefferson County was TCI, directly or indirectly. And there were outliers of TCI stretching from western Alabama into Tennessee.

But despite Crawford's insistence upon better housing and amenities including libraries, community centers, baseball parks and company leagues – part of the company's "Welfare Capitalism" experiment to counter trade unionism – TCI still threw up company housing with privys perched over open drainage ditches. Water for the 'villages' was wherever people could find it: wells, springs, creeks. The Birmingham Valley (Jones Valley) was well watered; in fact it was flat and swampy, much of it abandoned cotton fields. It provided the vast flat spaces needed for the mills and rail yards, but not a healthy environment to begin with. Now there were tens of thousands of people crowded into it with no sanitary provisions for them. Nor was anyone taking responsibility for cleaning up after the other work force – mules; or the employees' livestock.

Crawford found himself struggling with a 400 percent annual turnover in employees. The squalid living conditions in the fly and mosquito infested camps were killing and frightening off workers faster than they could be shipped in – even with TCI's aggressive nation wide, even world wide, recruiting.

The situation was exacerbated because Crawford, to his and US Steel's great credit, had ceased using convict labor – a practice TCI in Alabama had inherited from its early Tennessee beginnings, but a common practice throughout the south of the day. TCI had been the state's largest lessee of convicts, mostly black, many railroaded into involuntary servitude by corrupt courts. Besides being cheap, convicts' greatest appeal was that they couldn't escape the deadly conditions. Their mortality rate was a national scandal. Now, those thousands of semi-slave laborers had to be replaced with workers free to leave.

Dysentery, enteritis, and hookworm were rampant in the villages, and malaria struck thousands annually. Yellow fever, cholera, and smallpox killed at will. Name almost any disease and you could find it in the western section. Only the desperate – the unskilled rural poor, recent immigrants, and ex-convicts were willing to face such horrors. Not the kind of work force Crawford needed. Those who did stay averaged only a dozen days a month on the job. TCI was as dangerously ill as its workers. US Steel was not yet fully wedded to the idea of a southern steel industry, certainly not in Birmingham. What both TCI and its labor force needed was a good doctor.

One of the few places as unhealthy as TCI country was the Panama Canal Zone; but that was before future U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. William C. Gorgas turned it around. The success of the Panama Canal project, with its lavish outlay of capital, promise of huge benefits, and history of disaster, depended upon Gorgas and his team – and their new understanding of the relationship between sanitation and disease. Gorgas had famously succeeded in cleaning up disease ridden Havana, Cuba just after the Spanish American War a few years earlier, and now was succeeding in Panama.

Judge Gary, Chairman of US Steel, laid their problem before Gen. Gorgas. Lloyd Noland, one of his right hand men, Gorgas told Judge Gary, was the one for turning around the TCI zone. After nine years in Panama with Gorgas, and the Canal scheduled to open the next year, 1914, Gorgas could afford to let Noland go. Gorgas himself would be leaving shortly also. The young doctor Noland, not quite thirty three, jumped at the offer, and the challenge.

Noland came to the TCI district armed with his extensive medical, surgical, and sanitation experience in Panama, along with something of a military occupation mindset, all of which would serve him well in the gigantic task he had signed onto. But of more importance though, he arrived in Birmingham in 1913 armed with dedication to public health and a realization of what could be done, he had seen it, participated in it – despite the pessimism, and even hostility, of the medical establishment in the state.

Having demanded virtually *carte blanche* in authority from TCI and US Steel, and winning a \$750, 000 budget, a huge sum at the time, dwarfing the state's ridiculously tiny health department budget, Noland immediately embarked upon a massive cleanup of the district.

Work on water filtration plants and pipelines began immediately. Meanwhile, Noland didn't dither convincing people when they had bad water; all water sources were tested and he had condemned wells and springs dynamited. Nor was he into environmental impact studies. Swamps were filled in or drained and creeks straightened. Camps were sprayed regularly for mosquitoes, and crews began cleaning up after the mules. Livestock was closely regulated, and people were expected to clean up after themselves.

Every home in the company villages got a standard privy giving real meaning to the term "can". Wagons driven by TCI workers in white uniforms and ties came by daily to empty the cans. Milk and food supply inspections were begun. These sanitation measures were rigorously enforced by Noland's Sanitary Division, and if necessary, by TCI's own police force – much was riding on Noland's success.

Dr. Noland also cleaned up TCI's corrupt and ineffective employee health care system. He yanked responsibility from the superintendents, some of whom, in collaboration with crooked and incompetent contract doctors, had been skimming the company's health care contributions and leaving the workers to fend for themselves.

Noland was merciless in weeding out the medical staff, and choosy in hiring new staff. He surrounded himself as much as possible with staff he had worked with in Panama. He was also merciless in driving himself. When he wasn't managing the cleanup or the staff, he was in surgery. New infirmaries were opened and old ones improved. The small makeshift hospitals were maxed out, and in 1917 work began on the final piece of Noland's grand plan – a major hospital for employees.

He lobbied hard for the hospital and spared no expense to make it the best. Judge Gary and others of the USS big shots began to take pride in the project. It was up to date in all equipment and facilities, and designed to maximize sun light and air flow (in the age before air conditioning that was especially important). And as it was located in a “Tornado Alley”, the TCI Hospital, later renamed Lloyd Noland Hospital, was built like a fortress. By 1919, when the TCI Employee’s Hospital opened, Noland’s sanitation program had brought disease in the district down to highly respectable levels. His remarkable success became widely renowned and imitated, not in the least by other industrial camps in the area, and eventually by government agencies.

The new hospital, where blacks and whites were treated equally, if separately, was a model of efficiency and innovation, propelling Noland to the forefront of the nation’s medical profession. Awards poured in, and opportunities for study, including a trip to France during WWI to study battle field trauma treatments. Hundreds of doctors trained at the hospital, and it hosted a nursing school for years – all benefiting from Noland’s wide experience and both surgical and administrative skills.

Noland was the good doctor to all comers, black and white, to labor who complained they were only “fodder for mine and furnace” in the eyes of management, and to management who accused labor of being “shiftless, sloppy and dirty”. US Steel big shots from Pittsburgh and New York came to Birmingham to go under his skilled surgeon’s hands, just the same as ex-convict laborers from the villages. The TCI big shots enjoyed a VIP section however.

Dr. Noland made health care a good investment for TCI, as he was fond of saying, and Birmingham did become the steel making center of the south. And for the employees, the new healthy workplaces and communities made the amenities Crawford had initiated worthwhile. In the hierarchy of needs, health care came before libraries and ball games. But now the tens of thousands of employees and their families were free to enjoy community life, including the 11 white, and 13 black amateur baseball ball teams in their 600 seat TCI stadium.

The people who remember those days are few now, but I have heard many fond memories of ‘the good old days’ in TCI camps in bygone years. Yes, I understand that TCI villages were not perfect utopias. There remained friction between labor and management. Work was still hard, dirty and dangerous, often with health effects becoming apparent only later in life. There was segregation both racially and economically. The villages had low rent districts (for housing was not free, just affordable) for lower paid employees, and better housing for higher skilled workers and managers who could afford it.

Then there was Fairfield, a “model industrial city” beautifully laid out and landscaped for the upper echelons of skilled workers and management who could rent more upscale company housing, or buy lots and build their own homes. The hospital was in Fairfield and it was the favorite community of the medical staff. But for many, if not most of the people living in the villages, they had taken a step up; and equally important, there were more upward steps open to them, even if it took another generation to climb them.

Ironically, it was rising prosperity that doomed Welfare Capitalism and the company village life. TCI gradually divested itself of its paternalistic practices. It got out of the hospital business in 1951, donating the newly renamed “Lloyd Noland Hospital” to the people of the western section via the Lloyd Noland Foundation. But that was a long time ago, and Lloyd Noland Hospital’s reputation suffered over the years from bad management, and was bounced from owner to owner, usually accompanied by the aroma of scandal. It was closed in 2004 and demolished five years later to make room for the expansion of Miles College.

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## PART 2

I have chosen this rather unusual way of introducing the photos into our story because...well, frankly, I couldn't think of a better way. Pictures do so overpower text that I didn't want the story to get lost. The photos are grouped into sometimes overlapping sections: First, a few of the the people, because you are anxious to see how close your mental images match the actual faces.



Young Dr. Lloyd Noland, left, at about the time he came to Alabama. Born in 1880, Noland was a son of the uppermost crust of old Virginia society, rather like his mentor, U. S. Surgeon General Gorgas. Both were dedicated to their profession and rose to the top, one in government, the other in industry.

Noland was a college athlete and lifelong outdoorsman; whenever possible hunting, fishing, and golfing. He went to Panama for the adventure, and stayed for the

challenge. One of the keys to his success as a surgeon and diagnostician was the cram course in human misery he faced in Panama. Noland served Gorgas in Panama from 1904 until coming to Birmingham in 1913, mostly as Chief Surgeon of the 600 bed hospital in Colon. A gifted surgeon, and a hard driving administrator, Noland earned the title he was best known by: “Boss”.

His private life, though, read like a gothic novel – young doctor falls in love and marries beautiful Yellow Fever patient, Margaret Gillick, in the Canal Zone. She, too, sought adventure in the Canal Zone, and had the courage to stay during the big Yellow Fever outbreak, something Noland admired. They were happy, by all accounts, in their time in the Canal Zone and for a time in Alabama. Years later, though, high powered, gregarious doctor Noland lived mostly at his hospital, country club, or hunting camp, while his now semi-invalid, reclusive wife haunted the big house on the hill pretending everything was well between them.



William Crawford Gorgas, right, son of Confederate Calvary General Josiah Gorgas, who later became President of the University of Alabama, is perhaps best known for his sanitation work in Havana, and in the Canal Zone, putting into practice the pioneering work of Walter Reed and others who proved the connection between diseases, and mosquitoes and unsanitary conditions. The medical conditions Gorgas and Noland found in Panama are inconceivable to most of us living in the modern world – a world they helped make.



Perhaps his greatest contribution, though, was his work in WWI. In the American Civil War, as in most large wars, more soldiers died of disease than of battle wounds. That historic compounding tragedy was gradually brought to an end with US entrance into WWI. Gen. Gorgas was Knighted by the British shortly before his death for his service to mankind.



George Gordon Crawford, another son of the old south, born into the wrecked plantation society of Georgia in the post Civil War period. Like the others, he suffered from the poverty and dislocation of the Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction periods, but overcame it to become a high achiever. Like the others also, he defied the stereotypes and led in promoting racial and class equality.

Crawford, an engineer by training, got TCI on its feet, then went on to other challenges outside the US Steel family.

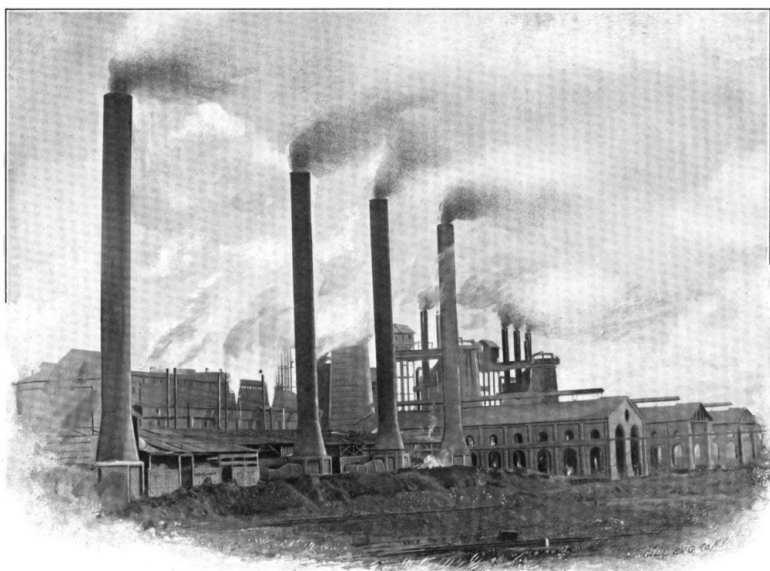
When we look at this map of TCI operations in 1937, we get some inkling of the size of the operation Crawford ran, and Noland doctored, and of the immense capital outlay staked upon them, and upon the TCI employees. The original conglomerate under the banner TCI was immense and complex, and it grew rapidly in its early years under USS, but during the Great Depression of the thirties it was scaling back. The TCI operation rebounded and reached its peak in the 1940's during WWII.



This “impressionistic map” shows Port Birmingham on the Warrior River at the far west, TCI/USS’s river access to the Gulf of Mexico, connected to the steel mills by TCI’s own railroad; some of the industrial water lakes to the north, the iron ore and limestone mines in Red Mountain on the east, the coal fields of the southern end of the Cumberland Plateau to the west; the broad valley, divided here into Jones and Opossum Valleys housing the mills and larger company towns and communities. Flint Ridge runs partway up the valley, terminating at “Hospital Hill” and hosting some of the more upscale residential areas. And this is just the core of TCI, their operations stretched from west Alabama to Tennessee to Florida.

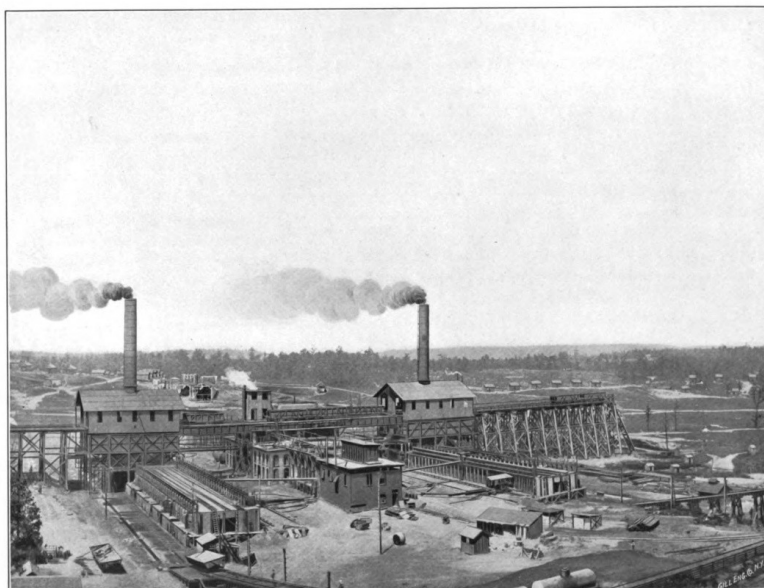
The next selection of photographs is a somewhat random sampling from the 1900 book published by TCI showing off for potential investors their assets and infrastructure. The book, **TENNESSEE COAL, IRON, AND RAILROAD COMPANY: DESCRIPTION OF PLANTS AND MINES WITH ILLUSTRATIONS**, is available in digital form online, and in reprints, at several places for those of us who are interested in 19<sup>th</sup> Century industrial stuff.

We will begin with the industrial facilities.



Sheffield Blast Furnaces, Sheffield, Ala., Division

141



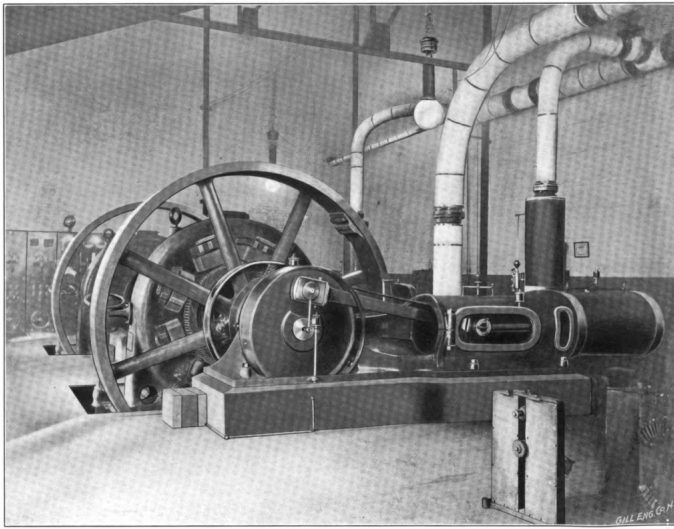
Semet-Solvay Coke-oven Plant, Ensley Furnaces

59



Pouring a Heat from a 50-Ton Open-hearth Furnace, using Fore-hearth, Ensley Steel Works

19



Two 225-K. W. Westinghouse Dynamos in Power House, Ensley Steel Works

43

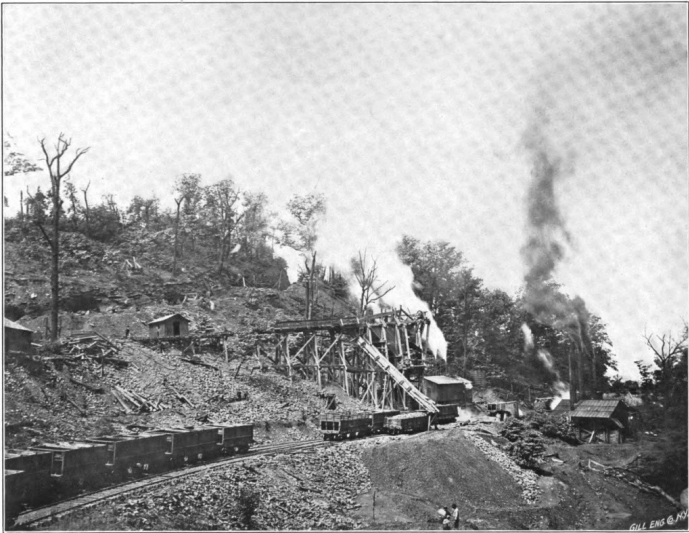


Gas Producer Plant and Open-hearth Furnace Stacks, Ensley Steel Works

11



Below are two red ore (hematite) slope mines on Red Mountain and an open cast brown ore (goethite) mine south of Birmingham in the coastal plain.



Railroad Tippie, Spring Gap Red Ore Mine, Red Mountain  
119

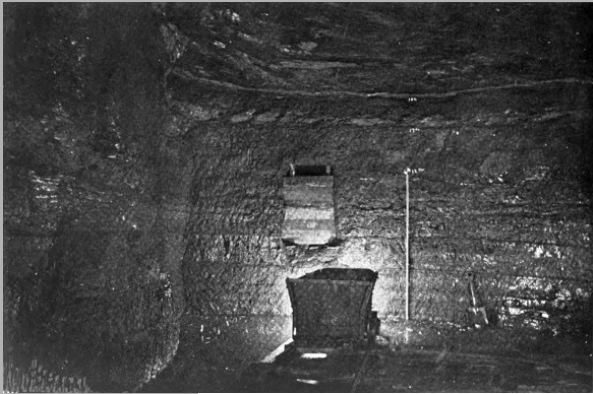


Railroad Tippie, Leogusta No. 1, Red Ore Mine, Red Mountain  
127



Greely Open-cut Brown Ore Mine, Goethite, Ala.  
130

On now to coal mining and processing facilities, equal partners with the others in iron and steel making.

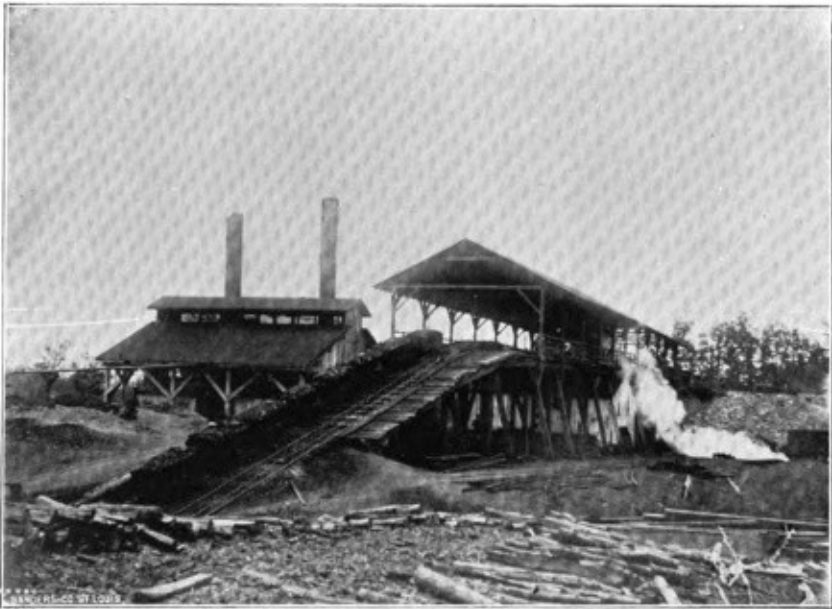


Blue Creek Coal, probably the best coal seam TCI had “...a man can mine and load eight tons per day.”



Slope Pit Mouth, Adger Coal Mine, Blue Creek Division

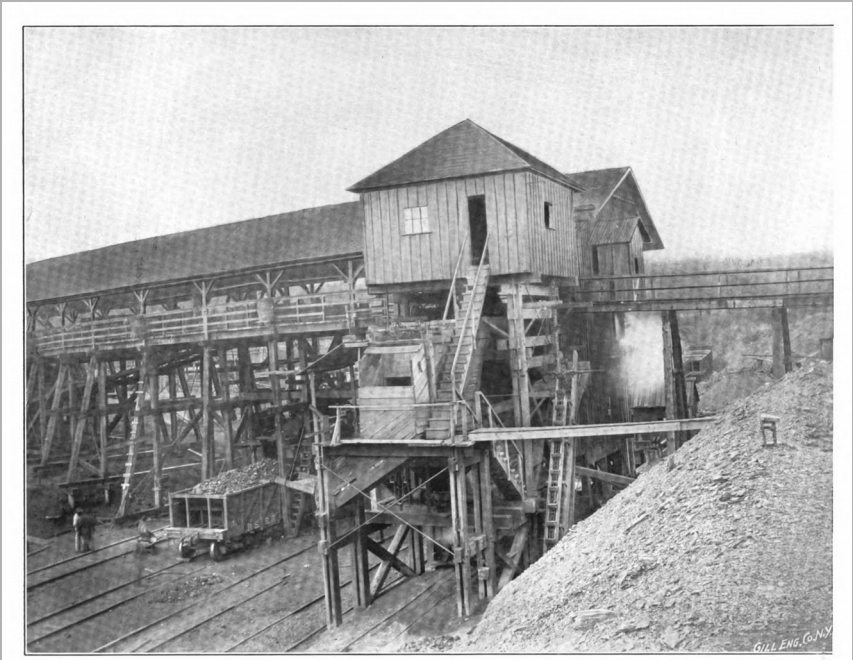
101



Slope No. 4 Coal Mine, Pratt Mines Division

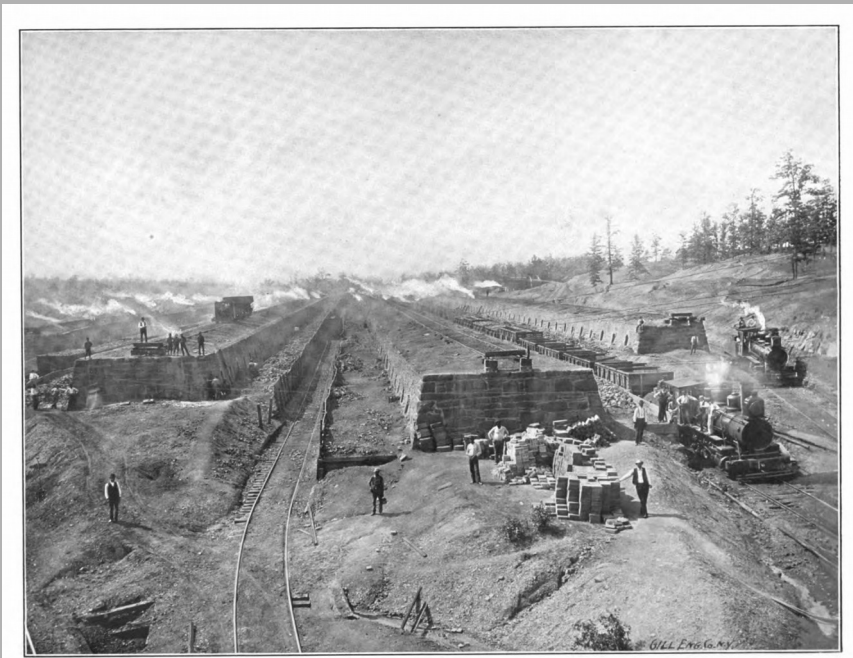


For iron and steel making, raw coal must be cleaned of waste rock and mineral impurities, not strictly by “washing” but by gravity separation. Coal is then converted into coke by baking in oxygen deficient brick or stone “ovens”, melting and densifying it. Then, in steel making blast furnaces, air is ‘blasted’ in and the coke burns super hot, literally boiling off the iron ore impurities.



Robinson-Ramsay Coal Washing Plant, Slope No. 2, Pratt Mines Division

99



Coke-oven Plant, Blocton Division

107

There were several coking operations scattered around the coal mining areas, revealing the vast amounts of coke used daily.

Lastly, but still a basic necessity of iron and steel making, the limestone (calcium carbonate), or dolomite (calcium magnesium carbonate) component gathers up the impurities, mostly silica, from the molten iron and floats them off as slag. This quarry in north Birmingham still operates today as a construction aggregate quarry, and is huge. TCI/USS had other quarries and an underground limestone mine adjacent to an iron ore mine.



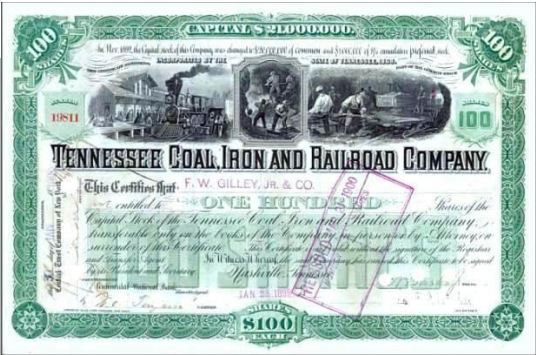
Dolomite Quarry at Dolcito, near Birmingham

131

This completes our very cursory look at TCI prior to its purchase by US Steel. The following comment from the TCI prospectus does add a useful footnote:

It is difficult to comprehend the extent or magnitude of the operations of the Company from reading a brief description of the various plants, and perhaps the following statement of some of the details of the mining operations, relating exclusively to the Pratt Mines Division, for the year 1899, may give some idea as to the extent of the operations.

The Pratt Mines Division mined in 1899 2,123,326 tons of coal, employing regularly over 2,500 men, over 250 animals and over 2,500 mine cars. Over thirty-five miles of wire rope were constantly in use hauling coal from the mines, and in order to take care of the mine water over fifty pumps were constantly in use, with a combined capacity of twenty-five millions of gallons per day. The mining of this coal necessitated the driving of 47,000 feet of haulage ways inside during the year, and the use of over half a million props to support the roof. The single item of oil to lubricate the wheels of the mine cars amounted to over 75,000 gallons.



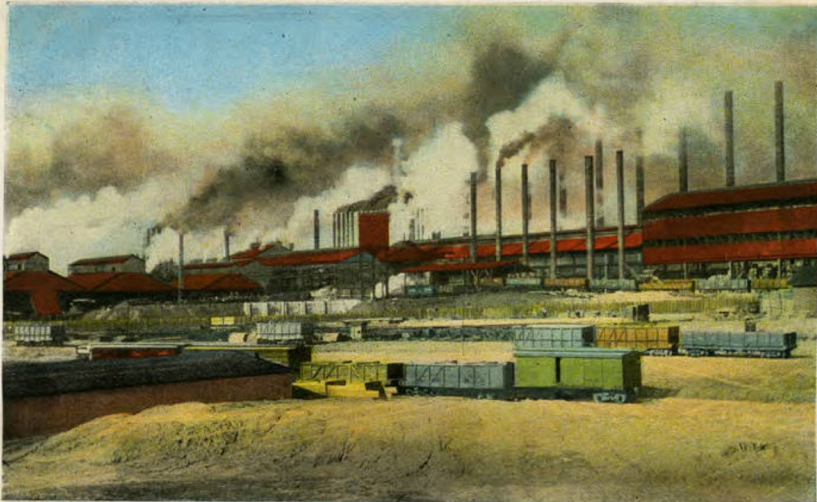
TCI was quite a bargain when you get right down to it, but in desperate need of new capital.



Now we will take a look at TCI during its heyday under USS, although operating as a subsidiary under its own name. Evidently the TCI industrial complexes were noteworthy to tourists as they adorn a series of postcards – and they are rather awe inspiring if one is not accustomed to heavy industrial scale building. These are part of the Alabama Archives and History Collection.



ENSLEY STEEL PLANT, BIRMINGHAM, ALA.

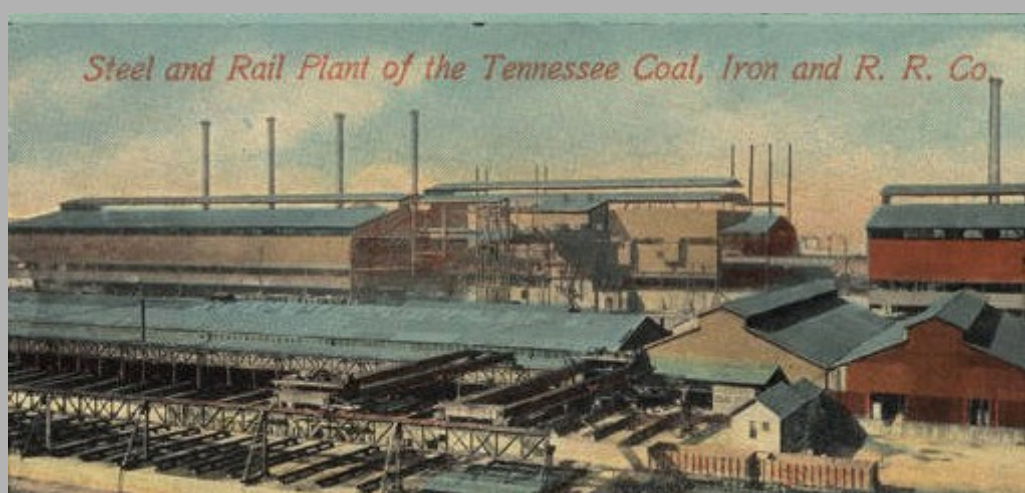
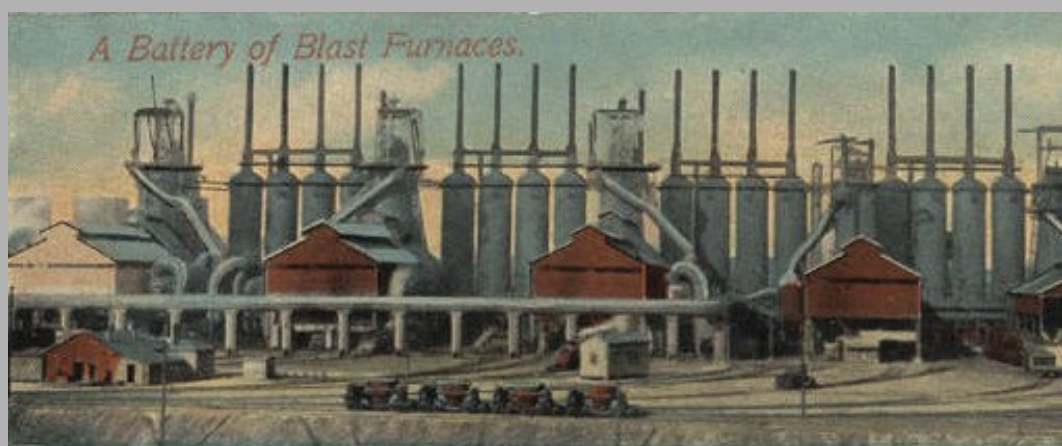


B-38—Aerial View, T. C. I. & Ry. Company Tin Plate Mills, Birmingham-Fairfield, Ala.

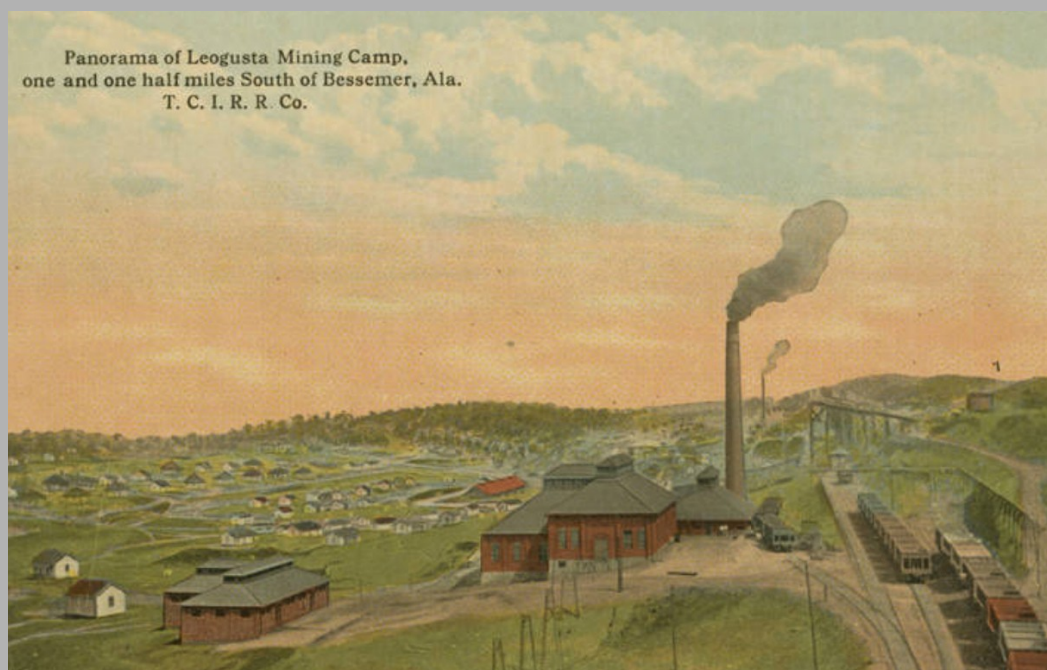


BA-11727





Panorama of Leogusta Mining Camp,  
one and one half miles South of Bessemer, Ala.  
T. C. I. R. R. Co.

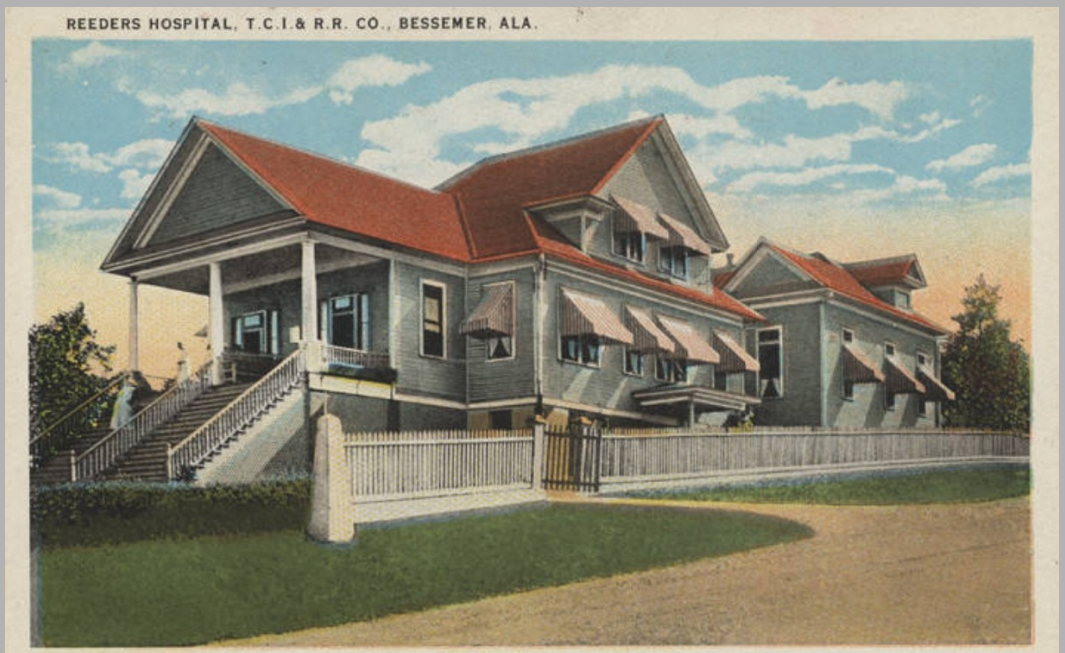






The “big hospital”, above, as it was commonly known, later renamed “Lloyd Noland Hospital”.

Below is a photo card of one of several satellite hospitals serving the local TCI communities and feeding the big hospital with the more serious cases.



Somehow though, black and white seems more evocative of the era. This series of photos, from Alabama Archives and History, and wikimedia commons spans generations in no really coherent order, taking a look at some of the TCI workers and their jobs.

Here a crew works white hot metal on a huge forge. Another crew straightens a rail. And lastly below, a crew shovels in just the right amount of dolomitic limestone to a furnace.



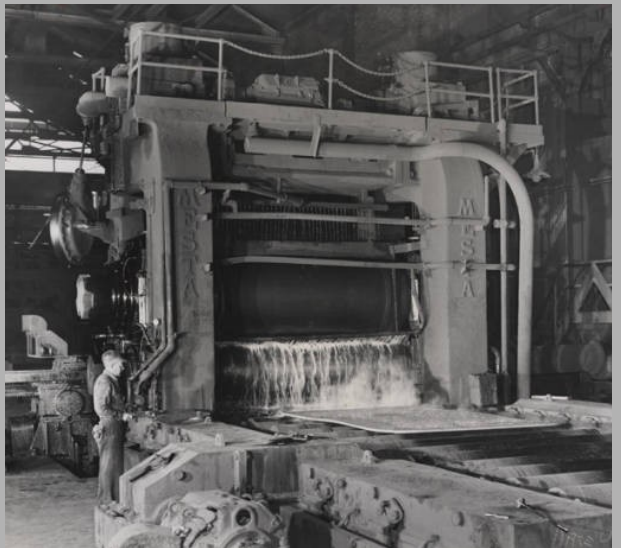


Everything seems to be on a vast scale in the mills, even empty spaces.



Pouring molten steel, a very HOT job.

Right, a freshly rolled sheet of steel gets a cooling flood of water at the Fairfield mill. Cooling steel required vast amounts of water.



The industrial complex ran on rails, and track laying and repair was a constant job with the miles of tracks going to all the facilities, many sidings, and all the track inside the mills. These are unidentified photographs, but representative of the hard labor of track gangs on TCI rail lines.



There would be nothing for the mill worker to do, and no need for tracks without the mines and miners. Due to a lack of available photographs of TCI miners, some of the photos below of coal mining and miners are from other areas/mines. But they all reveal coal mining as it was in the early to mid TCI time period we are studying. A progression in mining technology is apparent.



Particularly primitive and dangerous mining in an unidentified mine – carbide lamps increase danger of a gas explosion, no room for a mule, lots of props needed.



A far better job (L), cutting mine props for the Calumet Mine, in Walker Co., AL.

The miners below, identified only as in Birmingham, at least have head room and a mule.



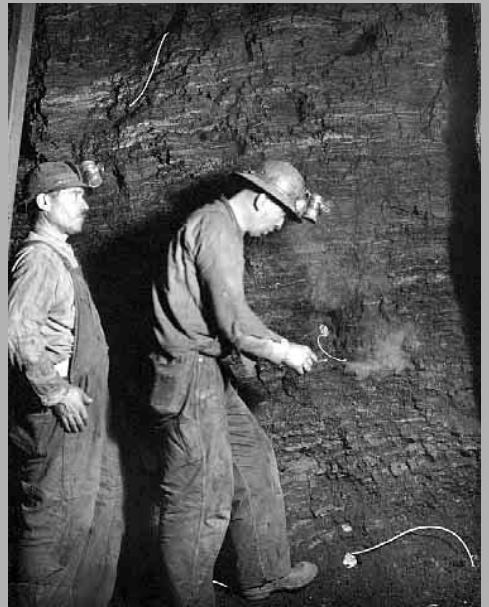
Coal Mine. Birmingham. Ala.



Drilling coal for shooting by hand, right, was gradually replaced by mechanical drilling as shown in the post card photo of a Birmingham mine, below.



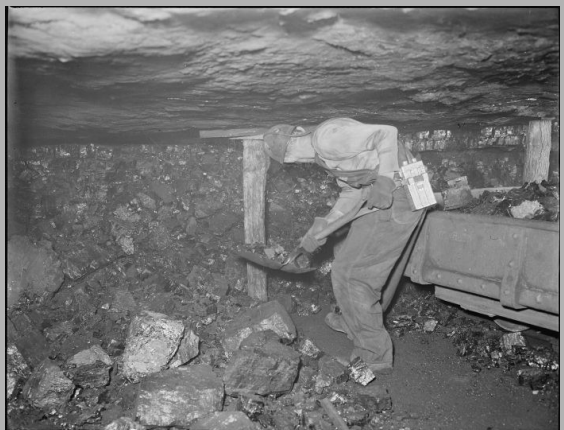
Right, blaster lights fuses to shoot coal. Too thick for most Alabama coal seams, imagine this scene crawling on knees.



Then clean up begins.



Note lack of breathing protection on any of these workers.

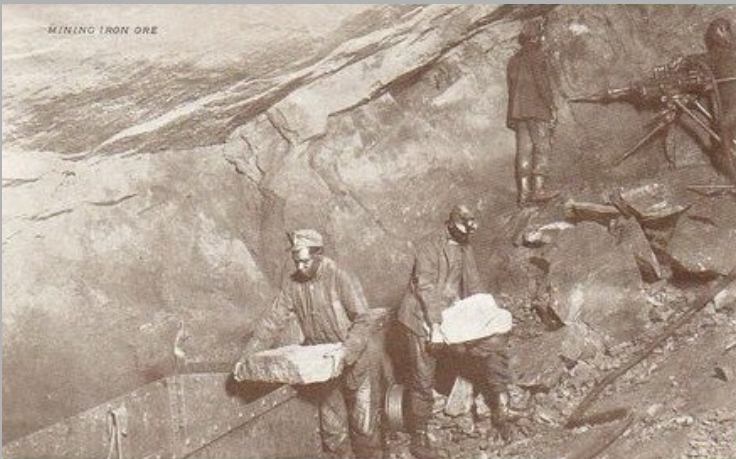


These two photographs, one of an unidentified coal mine, the other of an unspecified Birmingham iron ore mine show great anachronisms typical of a period of changing technologies in mining. In the first, a coal miner with fairly modern electric light and hard hat, with a mule powered coal car.



In the photograph below, we see miners drilling iron ore for shooting with fairly modern pneumatic drills but oversized rock being loaded by hand. The drills indicate this to be past the era of convict labor.

Except for the absence of explosive gases and larger mining spaces, red ore mining was very similar to coal mining; unfortunately I could not find other suitable photographs. Iron ore mining in the Birmingham area declined and faded out decades ago with the advent of high grade ore imports from South America.



Mining technology and safety practices improved greatly during the TCI period – here we see an early mechanical miner, and walls being sprayed with ground limestone to reduce gas escape from the coal and increase light.



Man and mule powered coal cars were replaced by cable pulls, then by motorized trams and mobile equipment. Roof bolts largely replaced props.



Coal mining technology continues to improve both in efficiency, and in miner safety, but we are looking at the TCI “Welfare Capitalism” period which played out by the 1960’s.



Now we've come to the final section of the photos, intended to give a glimpse of family life in the mining camps and mill villages. I'm beginning with a photo of the TCI employee commuter train that carried workers to their jobs, and family members where they needed to go inside the TCI railroad route. There was a small charge for riding the trains, but affordable for families of working men.



One place they might go is to the doctor's office or hospital. Another place certainly would be the company store. This is the Ensley store. A busy place in early TCI days.



Muscoda was a mining village with a relatively small company store. But this, 1946, was long before the era of modern “super stores”.

Edgewater was a more diversified industrial village, with a larger company store and a dispensary (below), among other amenities. Photographed also in 1946.



Inside the dispensary, right, primitive by today's standard but not for that day.

There were separate doors and segregated waiting rooms, as was the customary practice in the day.



This photo is identified as is a TCI kindergarten room at Docena.



Below, physical education classes at black and white schools; the first, at a black school in 1917. The second at a white school about the same time.



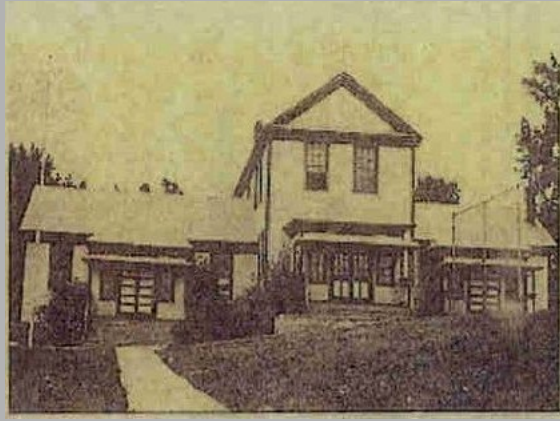
Right, students at Bayview school learn gardening in 1918.

In many ways, TCI schools were better than the public schools in those areas.





A TCI school at the Wenonah mining village. In the 1930's most of the TCI schools were transferred to Jefferson County.



Left, the TCI school for white children in Bessemer. It was taken over by other tenants over the years and is still in use.

Right, the TCI school for black children in Bessemer. It was eventually allowed to become derelict and demolished.



Left is a church building for black TCI employees in Bessemer. Each camp had at least one church for whites and one for blacks with alternating services for the different denominations.



In addition to these amenities, TCI provided its employees with 'community houses' for socializing, recreation, dances (all segregated of course), drama and music presentations. They also

provided free adult educational opportunities including lecture series on various subjects. All these, though segregated, were more or less on par with each other. TCI also built what were essentially country clubs for upper echelon employees who could afford membership, and those were mostly, if not entirely white.

Housing was also segregated, with lower rent black and white housing roughly on a par, but again, as housing for upper levels of the company structure became more expensive the better neighborhoods became exclusively white.



These were some of the lower rent neighborhoods literally in the shadow of the mills. The rent was just a few dollars a month, with utilities provided (as the were developed).

Many of the workers were from a rural background accustomed to self sufficiency in feeding them selves, and the company accommodated that as far as was practical.



The low lying valley housing suffered, and still does, from flooding. These privys stand in water, and sanitary cans are scattered about. But TCI was quick to see that the area was cleaned up and sanitized.

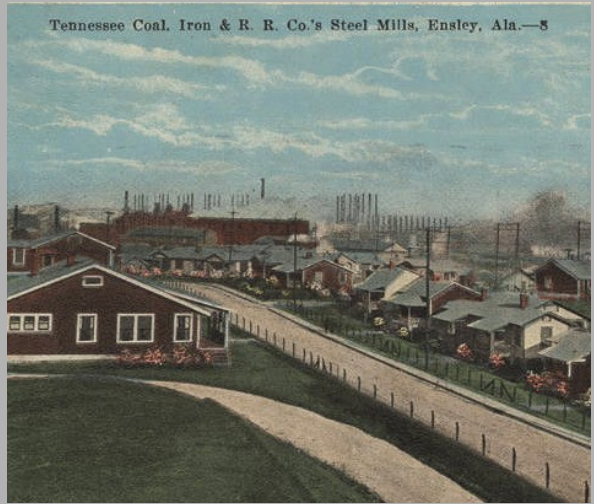
It is unfair to look at these neighborhoods, most of which are still in existence, at their worst. Time and care improved them, as did a beautification program to plant shrubbery. Larger, more varied housing came in along with profits; remember that much of this housing was built in the struggling early years of TCI in the hope of eventually making a profit.

Sanitary sewers and indoor plumbing came into TCI villages long before many rural areas and even many low income urban areas.



Perhaps the truth of these neighborhoods lies in between the first photos and this color tinted postcard photo below of the neighborhoods at their best:

It is also unfair to remember only the lowest end of TCI housing. Some housing provided by the company for its higher paid workers was quite nice by the standards of the day. They too, now privately owned, are still in use.



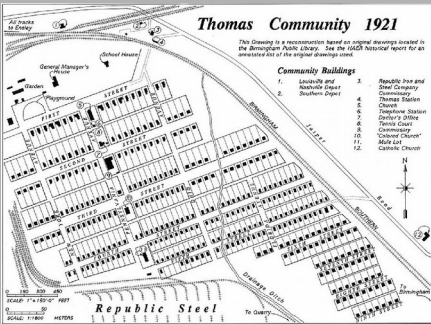
Below is the architects rendering of a Fairfield “Highland” residential development:



At left is a poor newspaper photo of a quite decent five room “cottage” in Fairfield from 1915. There are hundreds, perhaps thousands of TCI employee houses still in use today.

If you add in all the other late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century company housing, they constitute a major part of western Birmingham’s housing.

The TCI “Welfare Capitalism” was by no means unique. Many companies in Birmingham, and all over the country, had similar programs, some more elaborate than others. TCI’s was just on a larger scale, and at least in the beginning, was developed on a shoestring budget. A federal program to record architectural history, HAER, has plans of Republic Steel housing in Birmingham:



and photos of the Thomas neighborhood in 1992:

As can be seen, there was a range of housing to accommodate the employees’ needs, and their pocketbooks. It was the same with TCI housing, but the documentation is not available.



Left is a TCI “bungalow cottage” still in use in the 1992 HAER report. A trip through a few of these neighborhoods today would show them mostly filled with TCI era housing – some well kept, others in varying stages of deterioration.

It is a sad fact of life in this area that the late nineteenth and early twentieth century capital investments have not been matched in recent years.

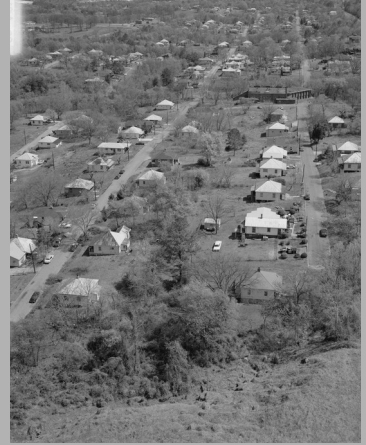
Right, a guard stands watch over a TCI red ore mine village, either Wenonah or Ishkooda in 1946.



It's a stark reminder that it was a company village, but also that good order was in everyone's best interest, company and employee.



A view the red ore mine village of Ishkooda in 1946. The mine power plant is purging out smoke, and in the distance, smoke from the mills can be seen.



Right, a view of part of the red ore mine housing development as it looked in the 1990's.

Below, the upscale TCI neighborhood of red ore mine superintendents and foremen on a hill in Bessemer, as it appeared in the 1990's. The housing had long passed into private hands.



Coal mining villages often were remote and had a somewhat different character than the more urbanized mill, or even the red ore villages. A federal history project (NARA) in 1946 captured photographs of life in several coal company villages in Walker County, AL, shown below. I'm not differentiating between them because there was no distinct "standard", and the quality of life changed greatly over time – some housing was improved, some deteriorated. It was very much like life in TCI camps.



In many respects it was also much like the average life in rural America at that time. Only those who can remember that time can fully appreciate the changes that have taken place in the intervening years, especially the period of booming industrial growth and prosperity after WWII when the European and Japanese industrial base lay in ruins, and China's had not yet developed.



Washdays like these were not at all unusual in the rural south well into the 1950's.



Life in the coal mining company camps was like life in most places in past days – work was a major part of life; and while that may have been drudgery, it was what made the rest of life possible. There are published accounts of life in some of the TCI villages. They vary greatly in emphasis, due I suspect, to the political orientation of the writers. Accounts found in university collections tend to emphasize racial segregation and economic disparity. Those found at other places tend to be more positive, nostalgic records of people who actually lived, and thrived, in the villages. One of the best of those I have found is this one:

[http://www.hueytown.org/historical/History\\_of\\_Edgewater\\_from\\_1911.pdf](http://www.hueytown.org/historical/History_of_Edgewater_from_1911.pdf)

This is, to me, an interesting story; but it is more than that, it is an important story. The TCI/Lloyd Noland story became the face of what is known as “Welfare Capitalism”. Scholars still study this story for their learned dissertations on economics and social psychology, which usually come out with a negative slant. I want to make only a few simple observations about that now virtually extinct phenomenon. But first, let’s contrast these two photographs.



They represent starkly different realities – coal mining perhaps a century or a little more in the past, and coal mining today. From man (and boy), mule, pick and shovel; killing toil whether suddenly from explosion or cave-in, or prolonged from worn out body and coal dust clogged lungs.



Today, most underground coal mines in Alabama use remote controlled ‘long wall’ mining equipment similar to this (above, right), but smaller for thinner coal seams. They consist of a self moving system of cutting head, conveyor belt, and huge hydraulic roof jacks that support the roof until the working face moves on. Though the operator is underground in sight of the mining face, he is in a comparatively safe and healthy environment. Coal mining remains a hazardous job, but not at all like it was in early TCI days. All operating aspects of an industry like TCI have experienced similar changes over the years. So what brought about this marvelous change? Let’s ponder that question, and a few others as we look behind our story.

First, let’s drop “welfare” from the story line; this is a story about plain old capitalism – people with wealth and power pursuing their own financial gains. They discovered that the best path toward their goal was to improve the lot of their work force. And it is the story of that work force who had only their labor and skills to sell, but by them they earned their livings in hard, dirty, dangerous work. They did it for their own interests also – to live better, to support and provide for their families, and help their children to a better future – a working man’s capitalism. ‘Welfare’, as we use that term today, was not in the bargain.

That bargain between capital and labor, of which this is just one of innumerable examples, disproves the claim of Marxism that the interests of capital and labor are always at odds – irrevocably and violently at odds. Humanity suffered terribly in the Twentieth Century because of that lie, and it still hangs as a threat over the world. Marxist/Communist revolutions killed tens of millions of people, deliberately exterminating “capitalists” down to peasants with a few acres of farmland who didn’t want it “collectivized” and to become de facto slave laborers for the state. That tragedy is being repeated in Venezuela today as the world watches – but doesn’t seem to comprehend.

What causes conflict between capital and labor is human nature – greed, envy, pride, hatred – sins that afflict mankind because of his fallen nature; that is, his spiritual estrangement from God. And that is what Marxist socialism fails to recognize. Marx was an ardent atheist, as are his followers. Though some Marxist/socialists claim to be Christians, they are more of the Social Gospel Christian heresy that came out of the same era as Marxism. In that heresy, sin and the estrangement from God resulting in the need for salvation by the blood of Jesus is ignored to the point of denial, as are the concepts of spiritual evil and spiritual warfare.

Marxism, itself, is often labeled a Christian heresy because, ostensibly, the good of mankind is the goal. The Communist maxim *“From each according to his ability to each according to his need”* is adapted from the Bible. The Book of Acts records of the early Church: *“And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.”* (Acts2:44-47).

Marxist doctrine, though, leaves out the most important part of the story of the early Church – faith in the risen Lord Jesus and the redeeming role of the Holy Spirit. Instead, Marxism relies upon an entirely unbiblical and historically unsupported faith in the innate goodness of man (that is, man unspoiled by private property – a silly idea propounded by Rousseau, godfather of the French Revolution, Marxism, ‘progressive education’, and other evils that afflict mankind to this day). **For more on this see**

Karl Marx was a talented writer, and Marxism presents a very appealing fairy tale, but fairy tale it is. Marxist doctrine holds that all human conflict (“history”) is rooted in economic disparity, and an equal distribution of wealth will ‘*bring an end to history*’ as there will be nothing left to fight about. Its first error is discounting other sources of ‘history’.

Invented and promulgated almost exclusively by privileged, self styled ‘intellectuals’, who have never done a day’s hard work, Marxism envisions “workers” almost as another species. Oppressed and miserable under Capitalism, but liberated by socialism. They imagine socialist ‘workers’ rising in the morning, shouldering their tools, and marching off to work singing happily, like the seven dwarves. Then, after a back breaking day’s work in the mines, gladly sharing the product of their labor with others who never lifted a finger – except that now the non-workers are not the hated capitalists. That is neither the reality of human nature, nor morally correct. The enjoyment of the fruit of your labor is one of mankind’s “Natural Rights”. **See comment**

St. Paul gives us a hint as to what happened to the early Church’s trial of socialism: “*For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.*” (2 Thessalonians 3:10) It soon became apparent to the Church that charity had to be limited to those unable to provide for themselves, not those simply unwilling.

No Marxist state ever progressed to Marx’s imagined point where a tyrannical government “withered away” as the people happily shared everything among themselves. As workers in a Marxist “worker’s paradise” lacked incentives for work, or to remain under Communist subjugation, all Marxist states became little more than vast prison labor labor camps. All are ruled over by tyrannical political and military elites who live like royalty. They stand in stark contrast to the history of this country, exemplified by this story.

Though the term ‘Communism’ has slipped into well deserved disrepute, the more benign general term for Marxist ideology, ‘Socialism’, still retains its luster.



Many Americans, especially the young, believe that ‘capitalism’ is a great evil, and that an all powerful state is the source of all that is good for humanity. The history of the last century should disprove that, but that history is not widely known because socialists control public education.

Even in this short history we see that the state is not always on the people’s side. Many states had convict leasing systems that were in one sense worse than slavery – the slaves at least had some capital value, and to be worked to death or subject to extreme hazard was not good business practice. The convict leasing system, as practiced in the states of the old Confederacy was more like the forced labor camps of Nazi and Stalinist types, where both labor and extermination were desired goals. And that brings up what was going on at this time in the rest of the world.

The late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries were the days when Social Darwinism was bringing a scientific basis to racism. Jim Crow laws were proliferating. Many states, from California to New York, were engaging in forced sterilization of the ‘genetically unfit’, and educating their students in the ideology of eugenics. Margaret Sanger, founder of Planned Parenthood, instituted the “Negro Project” to reduce the number of black people in America; a project still funded by the federal government (but hopefully not for long), by numerous states, and by tax exempt ‘charitable institutions’.  
(see comment)

The Eugenic Movement was founded in England on Darwinian principles by Charles Darwin’s cousin, Francis Galton (later “Sir” Francis). The foundation of Nazi Germany’s ‘science of racial hygiene’ was being laid in German universities, to burst forth into genocide after the 1933 election of Hitler as German Chancellor. The foundation of Nazi Germany’s ‘science of racial hygiene’ was being laid in German universities, to burst forth after the 1933 election of Hitler as German Chancellor. The Soviet Union was busily enslaving half a continent, and exterminating unwanted racial minorities (but for political reasons, to remove potential opposition – rather than Hitler’s demented quest to create a race of supermen).  
(see comment)

An all powerful state has never proven to be friendly to the common people's best interest. Here however, a capitalist entity, TCI, was rejecting quasi-slave labor and attracting workers with benefits; employing people of all races (about 55% of its workers were black), even employing ex-convicts. Many, if not most of its employees would be considered "unwanted" in other places, but here they were given a chance – because they were needed, because Capitalism was doing its thing. Here TCI was building single family housing, much of it still in use, promoting family life, education and advancement. Today's socialist welfare state actively discourages family development and crowds people into public housing ghettos where the tenant has no stake in the property and they soon become rundown and crime ridden. Advancement is often only from juvenile court to penitentiary.

Capitalism is not a religion or an all encompassing political system like Marxist Socialism; it is an economic system. Capitalism is not designed specifically to benefit the masses of people, but it is a good fit with Christian culture. Even so, economic decisions are influenced by human factors including short sighted greed, resentment, prejudice, anger, and the value one places on human life. We can see that in American and European Capitalist nations. We see that even more in the totalitarian brutality of Godless Communism, however. When the people refuse work, or try to escape, they are punished, if not killed, because without God, humanity has no value.

Unfortunately, people today give little consideration to the 'boat people' who risked (and often lost) their lives to flee Communist Cuba, Vietnam, and other 'worker's paradises'. The bloody, bullet riddled corpses entangled in the barbed wire barrier between Communist East Germany and Capitalist West Germany, and atop the Berlin wall, that were news virtually every day two generations ago, are now long forgotten. The "Killing Fields" of Cambodia were blamed on the 'Khmer Rouge' with little indication that the 'Rouge' meant 'Red', as in the symbolic color of International Communism. And the two greatest genocides in history accompanying the Russian and Chinese Communist Revolutions might never have happened as far as most public education is concerned.

We see in Lloyd Noland's story how people of good character, formed in a Christian culture, understood how well and fairly treated free people would serve capitalism's interests. It is that meshing of capitalistic economics with Christian cultural traditions that created the unprecedented wealth and freedom that we Americans have enjoyed.

Now back to the two photographs we are to ponder. The contrasts are stark, but what brought about the great differences between those two sets of circumstances? Simply time...no, time by itself is not the answer. Government regulation...a very minor factor. Advancing technology...certainly, but that is not the ultimate answer. It was the expectation of profit and the investment of excess profit that both prompted and financed the technological advances. In other words, it was Capitalism that was responsible for the progress in mining technology that improved conditions for the miners – as it did for other industrial workers and their families. But that was incidental to the technological progress – the primary purpose of the advancing technology was greater efficiency, and thus greater profit.

Once again we see the common interests of capital and labor. Though increasing technology has cost jobs in older sectors of the economy, it has opened up new ones. Unfortunately, the decline of Christianity, the rise of humanism, and the advance of Socialism in our culture is throwing the system out of balance for the worse.

Let us take a quick look at one aspect of that imbalance that has contributed greatly to the decline of this once thriving industrial community. In 1907 the Corporate Tax rate was 1%, and there was no individual income tax. By 1913 there was an individual Income Tax of 1% also. But those nominal taxes allowed the capitalists large amounts of money to invest – building jobs and spreading economic advance. In WWI, however, the taxes took a jump, and they continued to rise rapidly until both exceeded 50%. Obviously, if the corporation paid over 50% of its profits in tax, and then the stock holders paid over 50% of their income there would be little left for industrial development, and American industrial development stagnated, and areas like Fairfield and Ensley

stagnated also. Tax rates were lowered during the Reagan presidency, but remained high and have increased since.

Industry began looking for ways to escape the crushing tax burden and revenues from the corporate tax declined, despite the high rates. That cast more of a burden on middle class individual income tax payers. And the stagnant labor market created something new in America – a welfare class.

Part of that destructive imbalance too, is a prejudiced view of work, traditional family values, and industry. Work, hard work, whether mining coal or taking care of a family, is better than loafing and depending upon government welfare; any sojourn into urban ghettos and suburban shopping malls should confirm that opinion. Work is not part of the curse given to mankind back in Genesis, it was part of the original ‘image of God’ in which mankind was created – for God also worked. The Bible tells us of a blessed time to come when “swords will be beaten into plow shares, and spears into pruning hooks” – tools for work, not play. The curse was in the work becoming arduous and futile, as it will be until that day.

Let me close with this brief note. God had a plan for mankind; He was not ignorant of the social dynamics that would develop in humanity because of the differences in abilities, energies, and interests of people. In fact, God designed us to be different. The resolution to a lot of humanity’s problems, probably most of them, could be resolved by an emphasis on character. Good character is within financial reach of everyone. Martin Luther King, Jr. touched upon that subject in too limited a way. If we judged people by the content of their character rather than their skin color, or their shapes, features, hair, homes, clothes, cars, and the price of their toys, we would find a lot less economic disparity and a far more congenial society. That is, if we went back to some old fashioned standards of character.

A note about the author:

I was not a direct participant in this story, but always close on the periphery. I have lived my entire life, now fairly long, in TCI

country. But my family came early, long before TCI. My maternal grandfather, a very small farmer, peddled produce and fresh meat in the TCI coal mining camps. Several uncles and great uncles worked for TCI. My father worked the evening shift in a TCI coal mine and attended college in the mornings until WWII came along; but that was several years before I came into the picture.

Many of the people I have known over the years worked for TCI/USS, and I went to school with the children and grandchildren of TCI workers. I can attest to the fact that many fine men and women came out of the TCI villages.

Bill Kitchens